

COUNTY OF LOUDOUN
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 30, 2009

TO: Loudoun County Planning Commission

FROM: Ginny Rowen, Project Manager

SUBJECT: October 8, 2009 Planning Commission Work Session
Lansdowne Village Greens Sign Plan – Phase 2 (ZMOD 2008-0009)

BACKGROUND

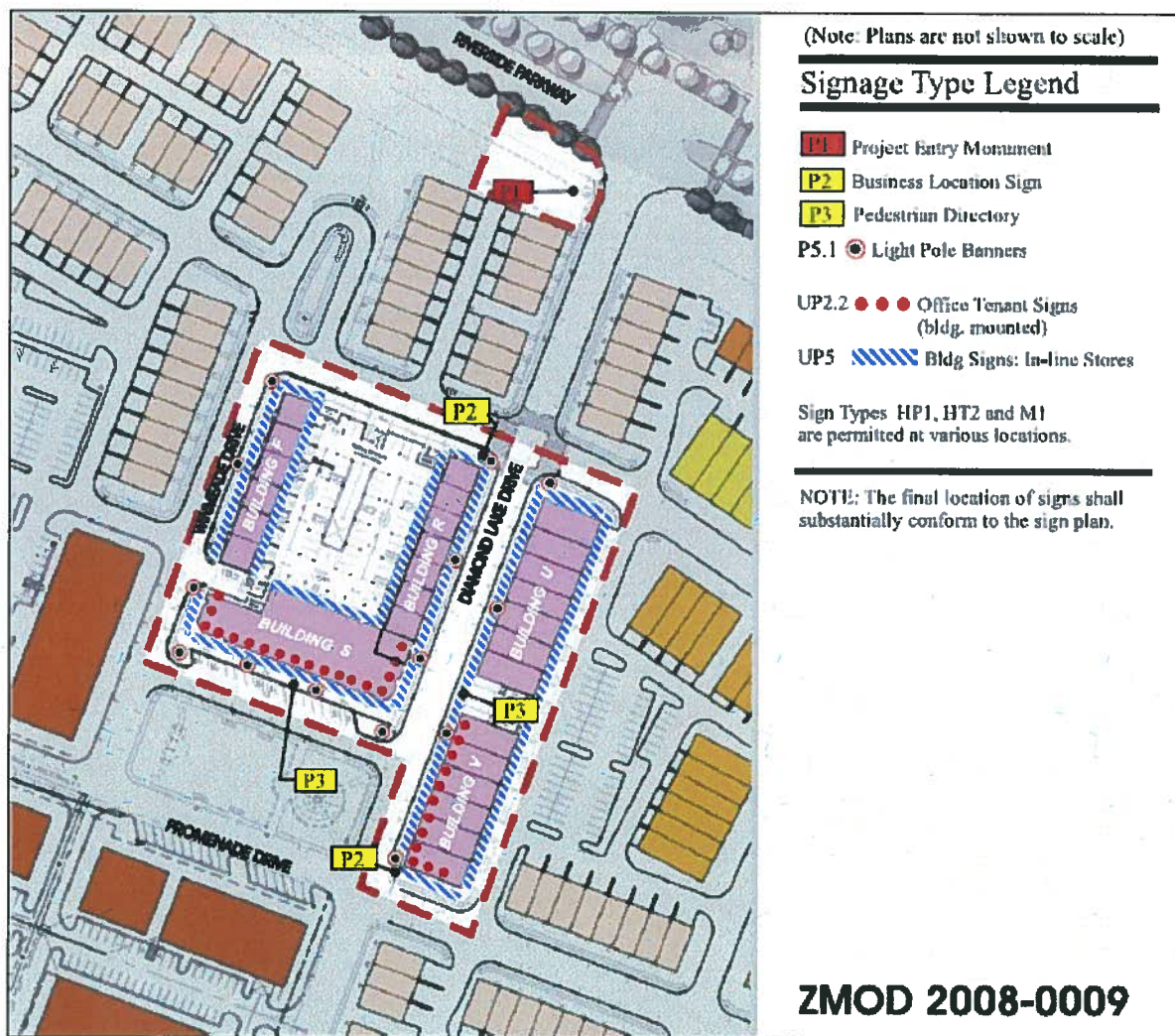
Saul Centers Inc. of Bethesda, Maryland has submitted an application to implement a Comprehensive Sign Plan that proposes changes to the permitted number, size, location, and illumination of signs within a 3.5 acre portion of the Lansdowne town center. The property is being developed pursuant to ZMAP 2003-0006, ZCPA 2003-0003, and SPEX 2003-0011 (Lansdowne Village Greens), in the PD-TC (Planned Development – Town Center) zoning district. The entire town center is approximately 57.8 acres in size and is located on the south side of Riverside Parkway, east of Belmont Ridge Road, and north of Harry Byrd Highway (Route 7) within the Lansdowne development. The proposed uses in this portion of the town center consist of live/ work units (first floor retail or office with residential uses or offices above the first floor). The proposal is an extension of the sign plan that was approved with the initial main street component of the town center (approved in 2006 - ZMOD 2006-0004).

The Planning Commission reviewed the applications at the September 17, 2009 public hearing. No one from the public spoke regarding the application. The Commission cited concerns regarding the number and size of signs and banners as well as the business location signs (type P2) which interrupt pedestrian flow. Since the public hearing, the applicant has agreed to remove the residential entry sign (P-7) and to reduce the number of small housekeeping signs (HP 1) from 10 to 6. The graphic on the following page depicts the sign types / locations currently being proposed by the applicant. The applicant is proposing changes to the conditions of approval (see attachment A-2 for a redline version of the applicant's suggested changes). The applicant has also submitted an updated sign plan dated September 28, 2009 that reflects their current proposal.

As noted in the Planning Commission staff report, the application contains the same modification requests that were approved in the original main street portion of the town center. The current application, approved for the development of live/work units, is a much smaller area (less than 3.5 acres) than the main street component of the town center. The predominant uses in this area will be office or residential units over first floor retail / office uses. In general, staff maintains that the signs for the live / work component should be scaled back from the retail / office areas to the west and further south. This would provide a better transition to the residential uses immediately south and east of the subject site.

As noted at the public hearing, staff could support the application with the following changes to the sign plan:

- Reduce the size / height of the business location signs (type P2);
- Remove the pedestrian directories (type P3);
- Reduce the number of banners (28 proposed);
- Limit the number of in-line retail signs to 2 per business façade (type UP5);
- Reduce the total number of housekeeping signs (HP1, HT2) from 10 to 5;
- Reduce the number of marketing signs from 4 to 2.

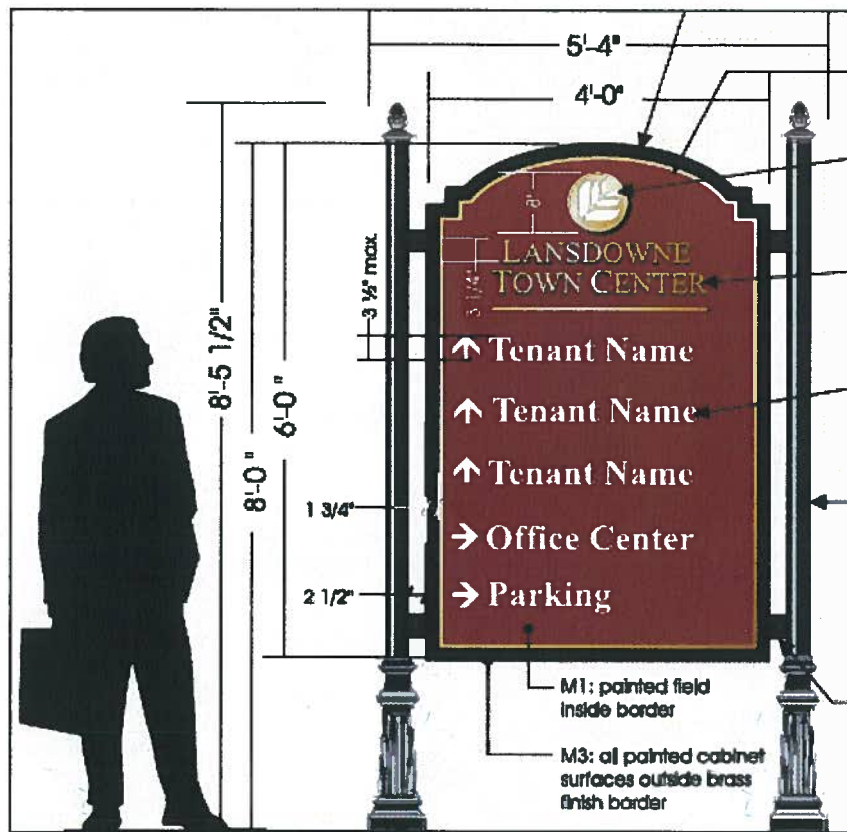


ISSUES

The Planning Commission should review the applicant's most recent comprehensive sign plan dated September 28, 2009, to determine if any remaining signs should be eliminated or reduced in size. For ease of review, staff has provided graphics of the specific sign types that should be modified in order for staff to support the application.

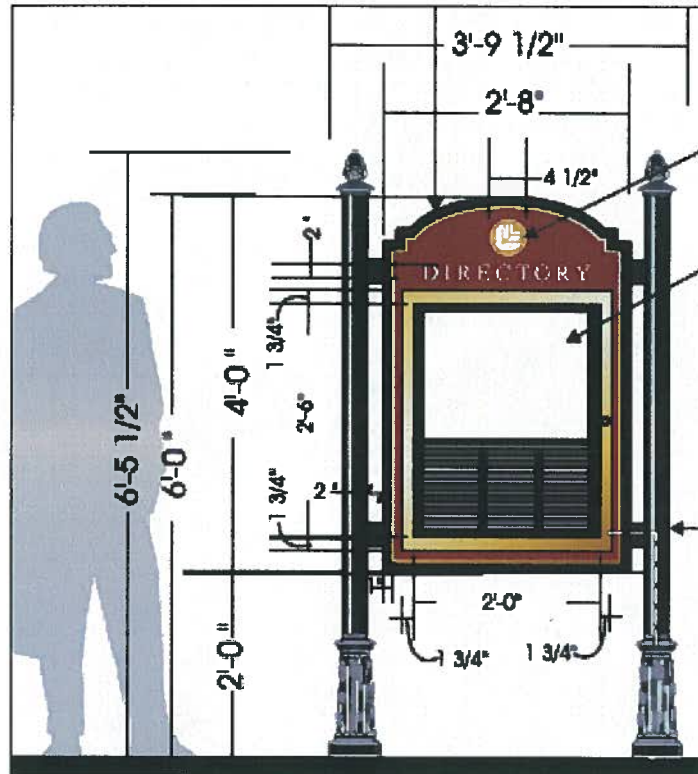
Business Location signs (type P2)

The applicant is proposing two business location signs. As defined in the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance, directional signs are intended to provide directions to specific types of uses on a site. Advertising, such as specific tenant names, is prohibited on directional signs. The sign regulations specify a maximum height of three (3) feet and a maximum sign area of four (4) square feet for directional signs. The applicant's current proposal is excessive in area and height and does not meet the definition of a directional sign (remove specific tenants).



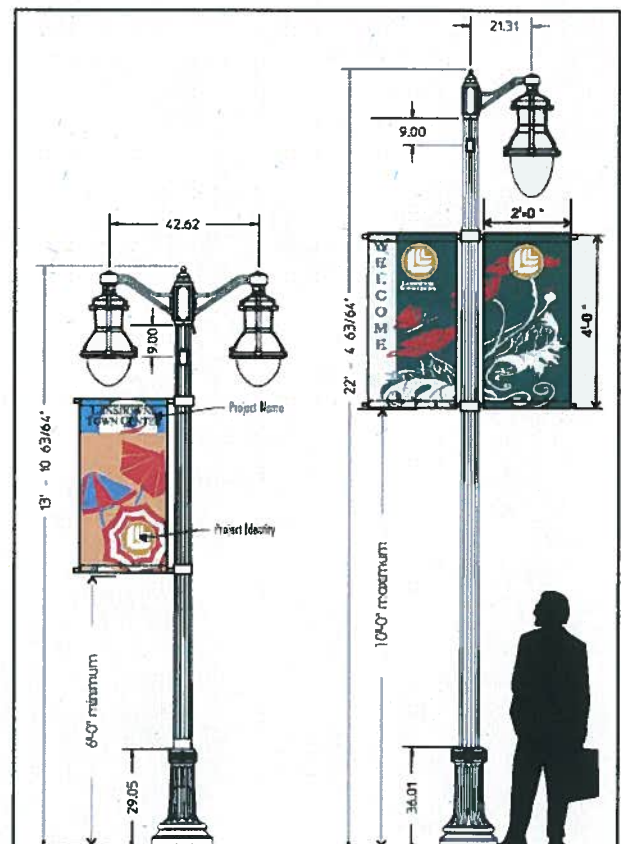
Pedestrian Directories (type P3)

The applicant is proposing two pedestrian directories. The Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance does not permit pedestrian directories at the present time. Staff notes that the Board of Supervisors will be considering amending certain aspects related to commercial signs. The request for a pedestrian directory should be removed from the CSP.



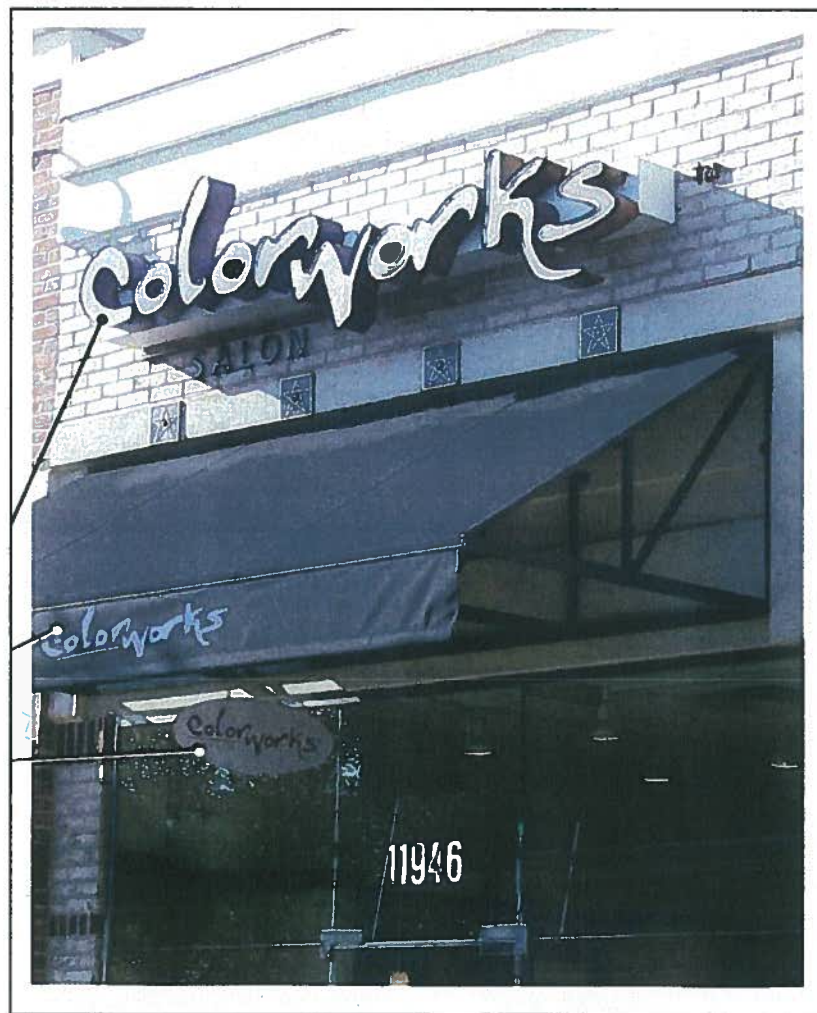
Excessive number of banners (type P5.1)

Banners mounted on light poles with graphics on both sides are proposed within the development. In accordance with Section 5-1202(A)(3) banners are permitted as long as they are not visible from public roads. The applicant is proposing up to two banners per light pole (14 light poles) for a total of 28 banners. The banners may be changed to provide seasonal decoration and are not intended to provide tenant / user names or advertising, but may include the project name and logo. Banners have the potential to detract from the relationship between the street, buildings and landscape within a community and could contribute to visual clutter. The number of banners should be reduced.

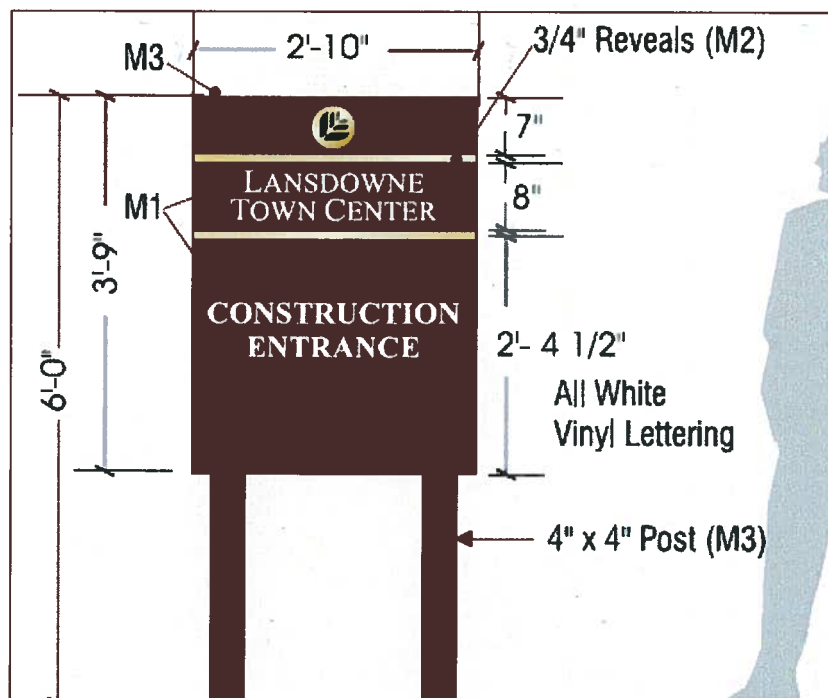


Excessive number of in-line retail signs (type UP 5)

Staff has concerns regarding the potential number of in-line retail signs. The applicant is proposing a maximum sign area of 75 square feet area per building façade per tenant (consisting of any combination of a primary building-mounted, storefront graphics on glass, and under canopy signs). In addition, in-line stores may also include awning signage that is not included in the maximum aggregate sign area (consisting of 10% of the awning area). The sign plan does not propose any maximum number of signs per tenant. The example provided in the sign plan (below) shows a primary building-mounted sign, awning graphics, and an under canopy blade sign. The signs provide redundant information and create visual clutter.

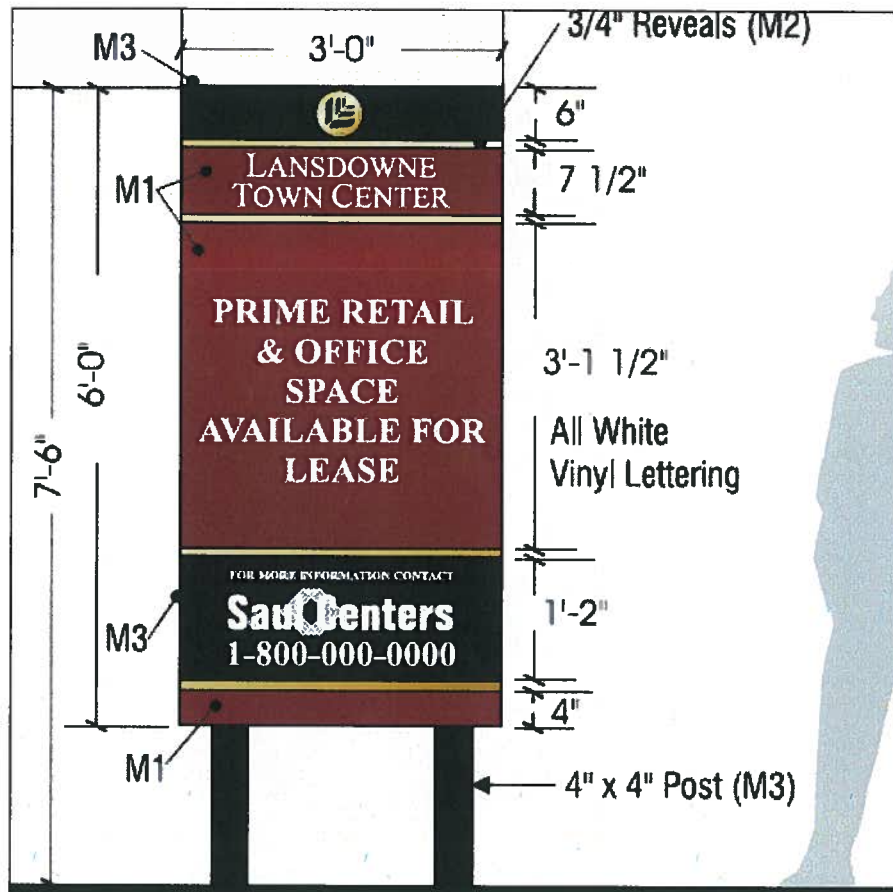


The applicant is now proposing 6 small and 4 large (total of 10) housekeeping signs. The intent of the signs is to identify locations such as restrooms, parking areas, no parking, etc. Staff maintains that 10 housekeeping signs are excessive for this small portion of the town center and recommends a maximum of 5 total housekeeping signs.



Excessive number / size of commercial marketing signs (sign type M1)

The applicant is proposing 4 free-standing commercial marketing signs. Staff maintains that the number of signs should be reduced to 2 and the size/ height should also be reduced.



STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff could recommend approval of the application if the number and size of specific signs and banners (as identified in the staff memo) are reduced and the pedestrian directories are removed.

MOTIONS

1. I move that the Planning Commission forward ZMOD 2008-0009, Lansdowne Village Greens Sign Plan – Phase 2 to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation of approval including the following changes to the Comprehensive Sign Plan dated September 28, 2009.
2. I move that the Planning Commission forward ZMOD 2008-0009, Lansdowne Village Greens Sign Plan – Phase 2, to an additional work session for further discussion.

3. I move that the Planning Commission forward ZMOD 2008-0009, Lansdowne Village Greens Sign Plan – Phase 2 to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation of denial subject to the following findings:
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Attachments:

1. Staff Conditions of Approval dated October 1, 2009
2. Applicant Conditions of Approval dated September 28, 2009
3. Comprehensive Sign Plan dated September 28, 2009

LANSDOWNE VILLAGE GREENS SIGN PLAN – PHASE 2

ZMOD 2008-0009

STAFF CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL (October 1, 2009)

1. Signs shall be provided in substantial conformance with the Lansdowne Town Center Comprehensive Sign Plan – Phase 2, prepared by BCT Architects Designers dated September 28, 2009.
2. Sign materials, colors, size, height, location, and lighting shall be provided in substantial conformance with the Lansdowne Town Center Comprehensive Sign Plan – Phase 2 prepared by BCT Architects Designers dated September 28, 2009.
3. The number of in-line retail tenant signs shall be limited to a maximum of two signs per business façade.
4. A maximum of five small / large housekeeping (informational) signs, as defined in the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance, and two commercial marketing signs shall be permitted within the subject site.
5. Individual signs and associated landscaping materials shall be maintained in good condition, assuring sign legibility and health of landscaped plantings.
6. Lighting for signs will be directed toward the sign and all of the fixtures will be shielded to not spill light upward or reflect or cast glare onto adjacent properties or roads. Animation, neon lights, and moving lights shall be prohibited.
7. Once all non-residential space within a building is either 100 percent leased or sold, both initially and on a recurring basis as non-residential space again becomes available for lease or sale, all non-residential real estate and marketing signs shall be removed from the building within 30 days following the execution of the lease or sale of all non-residential space within the building.
8. Once all residential space within a building is either 100 percent leased or sold, both initially and on a recurring basis as residential space again becomes available for lease or sale, all residential real estate and marketing signs shall be removed from the building within 30 days following the execution of the lease or sale of all residential space within the building.

9. Signs not included in the Sign Plan, but otherwise permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, shall be permitted in accordance with the standards of the then current Zoning Ordinance.
10. Additional signage for those sign types included in the Sign Plan may be permitted by the Zoning Administrator provided (i) such signage is consistent with the design standards of the Sign Plan and these conditions, and (ii) the approval of such signage would not increase either the total aggregate sign area or the total aggregate number of signs permitted by the Sign Plan by more than five percent, and would not increase the maximum area of any one sign type permitted by the Sign Plan by more than five percent.

LANSDOWNE VILLAGE GREENS SIGN PLAN – PHASE 2

ZMOD 2008-0009

APPLICANT RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

(~~August 21,~~September 28, 2009)

1. Signs shall be provided in substantial conformance with the Lansdowne Town Center Comprehensive Sign Plan – Phase 2, prepared by BCT Architects Designers dated ~~April 8, 2009.~~September 28, 2009 (the "Sign Plan").
2. Sign materials, colors, size, height, location, and lighting shall be provided in substantial conformance with the Lansdowne Town Center Comprehensive Sign Plan – Phase 2 prepared by BCT Architects Designers dated ~~April 8,~~September 28, 2009.
3. ~~The number of in-line retail tenant signs shall be limited to a maximum of two signs per façade.~~
4. ~~A maximum of five small / large housekeeping (informational) signs, as defined in the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance, and two commercial marketing signs shall be permitted within the subject site.~~
3. ~~5.~~ Individual signs and associated landscaping materials shall be maintained in good condition, assuring sign legibility and health of landscaped plantings.
4. ~~6.~~ Lighting for signs will be directed toward the sign and all of the fixtures will be shielded to not spill light upward or reflect or cast glare onto adjacent properties or roads. Animation, neon lights, and moving lights shall be prohibited.
5. ~~7.~~ Once all non-residential space within a commercial building is either 100 percent leased or sold, at both initially and on a recurring basis as non-residential space again becomes available for lease or sale, all non-residential real estate and marketing signs shall be removed from the building within 30 days following the execution of the lease or sale of all non-residential space within the commercial building.
6. ~~8.~~ Once a builder has sold all of the units in a residential section, all temporary signs (such as all residential space within a building is either 100 percent leased or sold, both initially and on a recurring basis as residential space again becomes available for lease or sale, all residential real estate and marketing signs) located on the lots shall be removed from the building within 30 days following the execution of the lease or sale of all residential space within the building.

7. Signs not included in the Sign Plan, but otherwise permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, shall be permitted in accordance with the standards of the then current Zoning Ordinance.
8. Additional signage for those sign types included in the Sign Plan may be permitted by the Zoning Administrator provided (i) such signage is consistent with the design standards of the Sign Plan and these conditions, and (ii) the approval of such signage would not increase either the total aggregate sign area or the total aggregate number of signs permitted by the Sign Plan by more than five percent, and would not increase the maximum area of any one sign type permitted by the Sign Plan by more than five percent.